Marks of the Mental: Rorty's Challenge

Abstract

Intentionality and phenomenal consciousness are the main candidates to provide a 'mark of the mental'. Rorty, who thinks the category 'mental' lacks any underlying unity, suggests a challenge to these positions: to explain how intentionality or phenomenal consciousness alone could generate a mental-physical contrast. I argue that a failure to meet Rorty's challenge would present a serious indictment of the concept of mind, even though Rorty's own position is untenable. I then argue that both intentionalism and proposals such as Searle's 'Connection Principle' fail to satisfy this explanatory burden. I conclude with the suggestion that only introspectibility may be able to unite intentional and phenomenal states whilst meeting Rorty's challenge.

I

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Richard Rorty poses the following dilemma: 'the opposite of "mental" is "physical" and the opposite of "immaterial" is "material". "Physical" and "material" seem synonymous. How can two distinct concepts have synonymous opposites?' (Rorty 1979: 20) Rorty is right that there is a tension here, for 'physical' and 'material' are routinely used as synonyms - eliminative materialism is a form of physicalism, for instance - and yet few if any philosophers would want to claim that 'mental' and 'immaterial' are synonymous. Rorty's dilemma is easily resolved, however, by contrasting 'physical' with 'non-physical' rather than 'mental',

thereby creating a more exact parallel to the material-immaterial distinction. Indeed, this is a move that any physicalist should insist on making, since the mental cannot be part of the physical world if it is by definition intrinsically opposed to it. Nevertheless, making this move immediately raises the question of what the mental-physical distinction, ubiquitous within the philosophy of mind, is actually supposed to amount to. If the physical naturally contrasts with the non-physical, how does the mental enter the loop? This question is particularly pressing for physicalists, who generally want to say that in some sense the mental *is* physical, but it also arises for non-physicalists, who need to say which features of the mental contrast with the physical.

What is required is a '*mark* of the mental' (Armstrong 1968: 41), a common feature to unite all those items we intuitively classify as 'mental'. The main contemporary candidates for fulfilling this role are phenomenal consciousness and intentionality. Both promise to provide the required contrast with the physical, or as the physicalist will prefer to say, *apparent* contrast with the physical, and both have good provenance and their fair share of present-day defenders. The view that phenomenal consciousness is the mark of the mental is often traced back to Descartes, and is now defended by, amongst others, John Searle, Colin McGinn, and Galen Strawson. The view that intentionality is the mark of the mental is also often traced to Descartes, as well as further back to Aquinas, though it is most indelibly linked to Brentano; contemporary intentionalists include Michael Tye, Fred Dretske, and Tim Crane.[1]

[1] For phenomenal consciousness as the mark of mental, see Searle 1992 ch. 4; McGinn 1991 ch. 3; Strawson 1994 ch. 6 and 11; 2005. For intentionality as the mark of the mental, see Tye 1995 ch. 4 and 5; 1997; 2000 ch. 3; Dretske 1995 ch. 1; Crane 1998; 2001 ch. 1. For a brief history of the concept of intentionality, see Crane 2001: 8-13. For Descartes as a source for both positions on the mark of the mental, see Cottingham 2000.

The main problem with using either phenomenal consciousness or intentionality, however, is that some phenomenal states, such as pains, seem not to be intentional, and some intentional states, such as dispositional beliefs, seem not to be phenomenal. This situation has led to efforts by advocates of intentionality as the mark the mental - intentionalists[2] - to show that all phenomenal states are intentional after all, and also to efforts by advocates of phenomenal consciousness as the mark of the mental to show that even though some intentional states are not phenomenal, they nevertheless have a connection to the phenomenal which bestows mental status; this is the essence of Searle's 'Connection Principle' (Searle 1992: 155 & ff.).

Showing some prescience about future developments in the philosophy of mind, Rorty anticipated each of these projects in outline, only to dismiss them both as attempts to 'gerrymander' (Rorty op. cit.: 22). What he meant was that in assuming our intuitive grasp of what counts as 'mental' reflects a significant demarcation within nature, and hence that there must be some underlying unity to the apparently disparate categories of 'intentional' and 'phenomenal', advocates of Intentionalism and the Connection Principle are taking an unfair advantage over a sceptic like Rorty who regards the apparent disparateness as good *prima facie* evidence that there is no underlying unity to the category 'mental' at all.

Rorty went on to conclude that there is 'no connection' (ibid.: 32) between the phenomenal and intentional, but my interest in this paper is less in his conclusion than his methodology. In Rorty's view, beginning from our intuitive grasp of what counts

[2] By intentionalism, I mean the view that intentionality is the mark of the mental, and not the stronger claim, defended by Tye, Dretske and others, that mental states are exhausted by their intentionality. For

as mental, and then trying to find a feature to unite all these items, makes sense only if we are prepared to assume that our intuitions derive from a theoretically neutral, common-sensical, and as he often says, 'ahistorical' conception of mind. If, however, we are open to the possibility that our intuitions may in fact derive from a particular historical theory, such as Cartesian Dualism, then this approach seems considerably less attractive: the search for the mark of the mental might be the search for a feature to unify items which have nothing more in common than their unification within Descartes' defunct theory.

Rorty's challenge to any proposal for a mark of the mental, then, is to provide an explanation of how the cognisance of that feature might have led to all of the items we intuitively classify as 'mental' being grouped together and contrasted with the physical. Thus for an intentionalist to meet Rorty's challenge, for example, they would not only need to provide an intentionalist analysis of apparently non-intentional states like pain, but would also need to indicate how the intentionality of pain might reasonably, if mistakenly, have been thought to present a significant contrast between pain and merely physical symptoms. Unless this challenge can be met, at least in outline, we have no reason to regard any purported mark of the mental as the reason pains, emotions, desires, beliefs, etc. were brought together under the classification 'mental'. This matters because if they were brought together for another reason - such as their supposed ineffability or non-spatiality, for instance - then it would simply be an accident even if they did all happen to have something in common.

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a related distinction between weak and strong versions of intentionalism, see Crane 2001: 83-88.

The aim of this paper is to re-evaluate the main proposals for a mark of the mental in light of Rorty's challenge. Analytic philosophers of mind have routinely complained about 'Cartesian intuitions' ever since Ryle, so they are hardly well-placed to ignore Rorty's suggestion that the whole subject may in fact be held together by Cartesian intuitions. In spite of this, the explanatory burden of Rorty's challenge has hardly been addressed, let alone met. I proceed as follows: in the next section I look further into Rorty's 'no connection' thesis, in Sections III and IV, I look respectively at how Intentionalism and proposals like the Connection Principle bear up to Rorty's challenge, and finally in Section V, I suggest an alternative mark of the mental which clearly does meet the challenge.

II

By the time of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty had abandoned the eliminative materialism that made his name in the '60s, as well as the Sellarsian view of 'incorrigibility as the mark of the mental' (Rorty 1970) he later combined it with. His new view was that the reason we intuitively classify certain items as mental is not because of any mark of the mental, but rather because of 'our readiness to fall in with a specifically philosophical language-game' (Rorty 1979: 22), a language-game which originated with Descartes. Even eliminativism was now too much of a concession to the tradition for Rorty, who argued that the best position to take on the mind-body problem was simply to refuse to comment, this being the only sure-fire way to avoid being drawn into what he regarded as an archaic and fruitless conversational cul-de-sac (ibid.: 121-5, see also Rorty 2007: 147-159).

The ‘philosophical language-game’ of the mental, according to Rorty, is based upon a ‘family resemblance’ (Rorty 1979: 24) between intentional and phenomenal states. Mental images and occurrent thoughts, which Rorty thinks are the Cartesian paradigms of the mental (Rorty 1970: 410-1; Rorty 1979: 27-8), are both intentional and phenomenal. Intentional but non-phenomenal states, such as dispositional beliefs, and phenomenal but non-intentional states, such as sensations, then qualify as mental in virtue of resembling these paradigms, with states that are neither intentional nor phenomenal relegated to ‘the merely physical’ (Rorty 1979: 24). Rorty adopts this family resemblance approach in order to claim that there is ‘no one thing in common’ (Wittgenstein 1953: §65) between states which are intentional but non-phenomenal and states which are phenomenal but non-intentional: each resembles the paradigm in virtue of either its intentional or phenomenal properties, but there is ‘no connection’ between these kinds of property.

Given the polemical purposes to which Rorty intended his analysis, it is perhaps surprising to find John Cottingham suggesting that ‘the schema canvassed by Rorty’, that ‘for something to be classed as mental it must fall into one or other of *two* domains’ (Cottingham 2000: 137), might in fact have been Descartes’ own view. Cottingham thinks this because Descartes often wrote as if sensory ideas were entirely lacking in intentional content, or as he put it, ‘objective reality’. If sensory ideas are non-intentional whereas the other kind of idea Descartes distinguished, the ‘ideas of pure mind’ (ibid.: 135), are intentional, then Descartes may have been employing two distinct criteria for mentality, namely phenomenal consciousness for sensory ideas and intentionality for the others; Cottingham notes that Malebranche was later to explicitly endorse this approach (ibid.: 136).

For Cottingham, then, Rorty's view is simply that a state is mental if and only if it is either phenomenal, intentional, or both. Another philosopher who apparently sees no difficulties with a disjunctive analysis of the mental is David Chalmers, who thinks we have 'two quite distinct concepts of mind' (Chalmers 1996: 11), the psychological - concerned with causal role in the explanation of behaviour - and the phenomenal; he adds that 'a strong case might be made for a psychological analysis' of intentional states (ibid.: 21). It seems to me, however, that it is Rorty's reading of the situation which is the correct one, and that a disjunctive analysis of mind is inherently polemical in content, rather than simply an alternative to a unitary mark of the mental. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that if 'mental' is just an abbreviation for 'intentional, phenomenal or both', and there is no conceptual connection between intentional and phenomenal properties, then there can be no good reason to abbreviate these properties of a person rather than others. We might as well abbreviate height and phenomenal properties, or hair colour and intentional properties. This drains the term 'mental' of any significance: 'intentional' and 'phenomenal' retain their distinctive meanings, but the term we use to group them together makes no further contribution. Such a result flies in the face of common-sense, for we naturally suppose that to describe pains, emotions, beliefs, etc. as all *mental* states is to say something distinctive about them. The categorisation implies a kind of unity, which philosophers such as Descartes and Malebranche invoked the notion of mental substance to explain. To reject this, rather than trying to recapture it in naturalistic terms, is tantamount to giving up on the concept of mind altogether: nothing distinctive would remain.

The second reason is that ascriptions of phenomenal and intentional states are mutually implicating in multifarious ways. This is brought out well in a discussion of zombies by Kathleen Wilkes, in which she points out that the hypothesis that anatomically and behaviourally human-like beings could lack all consciousness would become progressively more difficult to maintain as our interactions with them became more involved. 'Evidently we cannot say that [zombies] are aware of something', she says, '[b]ut no more is it legitimate to say that they notice, apprehend, understand, or are embarrassed' (Wilkes 1978: 110). Thus, for example, there is a clear difference between being embarrassed and acting as if you are embarrassed, since only the former requires phenomenality. Zombies could only act as if embarrassed, then, but this description does not adequately characterise their behaviour, since it could imply an intent to deceive. In order to describe their sincere but non-phenomenal embarrassment behaviour, then, we would apparently need to coin new terms; our own have too many phenomenal connotations.

Wilkes concludes that we 'cannot regard "being conscious" as analogous to one of many spikes on a hedgehog's back, a spike it might have or lose independently of all the other spikes.' (ibid.: 110). Now if there really were no conceptual connection between phenomenal and intentional properties, only the 'empirical fact that they go together' (Chalmers 1996: 22), then we might simply think that Wilkes' observations reflect our tendency to conflate 'two quite distinct concepts of mind'. An alternative conclusion, however, would be that since a disjunctive concept of mind actively tempts us to conflate the phenomenal with the intentional, we would be better off without it. This seems the stronger conclusion given that a disjunctive conception

does not provide the term ‘mental’ with any distinctive content that might persuade us to retain it in spite of the purported conflations it encourages.

It seems that Rorty is right, then, that if there is ‘no connection’ between the phenomenal and intentional, then our concept of mind should be held to account. Nevertheless, although Rorty reads the implications of his thesis correctly, the thesis itself is untenable. This is because even if some intentional states are non-phenomenal and some phenomenal states are non-intentional, there still remains a conceptual connection between the phenomenal and intentional properties of those states which Rorty admits have both, namely mental images and occurrent thoughts. For instance, if I am having a yellowish-orange after-image, then the intentional content is the apparent image experienced, and the phenomenal properties must be appropriate to the experiencing of something yellowish-orange. If the content changes to a red after-image, then the phenomenal properties would also have to change. Likewise, if the phenomenal properties constitutive of what it is like to experience the after-image change, then it seems the content would also have to change.[3]

A similar conceptual connection holds between the phenomenal and intentional properties of occurrent thoughts. Chalmers disputes this, giving the example that, ‘when I think that Don Bradman is the greatest cricketer of all time, it seems plausible to say that I would have had the same belief even if I had had a very different conscious experience associated with it’ (Chalmers op. cit.: 20).[4] However, although that particular thought could be entertained with a number of different

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[3] For a defence of this claim in response to some apparent counterexamples, see Tye 2000: 76-93.

phenomenologies, the phenomenology would nevertheless still have to be appropriate to a case of thinking about Bradman and cricket: it is hard to see how I could be thinking that thought if it seemed to me that I was thinking about Billie Holiday's singing voice, for instance.[5]

The conceptual connection between phenomenal consciousness and intentionality undercuts any reason for thinking that we only group phenomenal and intentional states together because of a family resemblance. Of course it might still be the case that even though phenomenal and intentional properties systematically covary when both present, they can also exist separately as properties of states which are exclusively intentional or exclusively phenomenal. If so, then the concept of mind is disjunctive after all, despite the falsity of Rorty's 'no connection' thesis. Nevertheless, the presence of an unexplained connection between the intentional and phenomenal properties of some states strongly suggests that there is more to the concept of mind than simply the truth of a disjunction, and this counts in favour of any account which can provide a unifying mark of the mental, especially if it can explain these connections.

III

[4] I will follow Chalmers in using 'thought' and 'belief' interchangeably, although some authors find it important to distinguish them, e.g. Crane 2001: 102-8.

[5] For a vivid illustration of the connection between the intentional content and phenomenology of occurrent thoughts, see Pitt 2004: 26-9.

Though the phrase was not his, Brentano did think that intentionality is the mark of the mental. Russell, who introduced Brentano into the analytic canon, translated what subsequently became Brentano's best known passage as follows:

> ... intentional inexistence is exclusively peculiar to psychical phenomena. No physical phenomenon shows anything similar. And so we can define psychical phenomena by saying that they are phenomena which intentionally contain an object in themselves. (Russell 1921: 15; Brentano 1973: 89)

Russell glosses this as the claim that 'relation to an object is an ultimate irreducible characteristic of mental phenomena', saying he had once been inclined to agree with Brentano 'except possibly in the case of pleasure and pain' (Russell op. cit.: 15). Contemporary intentionalists, however, would generally not want to attribute to Brentano the view that intentionality is an 'irreducible characteristic' of the mental, since the majority are physicalists who want to combine Brentano's thesis with a naturalistic reduction of intentionality. Moreover, resistance to Russell's hunch that sensations like pleasure and pain are exceptions to Brentano's thesis became something of a defining feature of post-60s intentionalism, after Armstrong set out to show that apparently 'intransitive' bodily sensations possess a concealed transitivity or 'relation to an object' after all (Armstrong 1962; Armstrong 1968: 306-22).

Brentano's thesis was of central importance to the phenomenological movement, as well as to analytic philosophy, first in the guise of Chisholm's logico-linguistic reformulation, and then subsequently within the physicalist tradition that stems from Place and Smart. It is perhaps inevitable that its interpretation would undergo various

changes across times and traditions. Nevertheless, the question still arises of the extent to which Brentano's original claim that intentionality ('intentional inexistence') is the mark of the mental ('is exclusively peculiar to psychical phenomena') relates to the position contemporary intentionalists have in mind. This is not simply of historical interest, since it bears directly on the further question of whether intentionalism can meet Rorty's challenge.

Contemporary philosophers usually introduce intentionality by invoking the idea of mental states possessing 'directedness' (from Brentano's 'direction towards an object'; op. cit.: 88) or 'aboutness' (from Feigl 1967: 50). Thus, for example, in thinking about Italy, my thoughts are directed upon or are about Italy. This conception of intentionality generates a clear intuitive problem for physicalists, namely the problem of understanding how brain states can 'reach out' to the external states of affairs they represent. As McGinn once vividly put it, 'Consciousness seems to extend an invisible hand into the world it represents ... how on earth could my *brain* make that possible? No ethereal prehensile organ protrudes from my skull!' (McGinn 1991: 40)

Unlike McGinn, the vast majority of physicalists regard the prospects for a naturalistic account of intentionality as very good. This is what has made intentionalism seem so attractive to them, the reasoning being that if all mental states are intentional, and intentionality can be naturalised, then it should be possible to unify and naturalise the mind in one fell swoop. Consequently much work has been put into the twin tasks of providing an intentionalist analysis of apparently non-intentional mental states, and a

naturalistic account of content to explain how brain states can be directed upon external states of affairs.

Brentano, however, was emphatically not exercised by the question of how brain states can be directed upon external states of affairs. He would simply have denied that they are, since he would classify brain states as physical rather than psychical phenomena, and his thesis denies that physical phenomena possess ‘direction towards an object’. Contemporary intentionalists might just put this down to Brentano’s unfortunate ignorance of the truth of physicalism, of course, but such a response seriously underestimates the significance of Brentano’s phenomenalism: his stated aim was to find a way to distinguish different types of *phenomena*, i.e. appearances. As Dermot Moran has put it, ‘the distinction between the ‘physical’ and the ‘psychical’ in Brentano’s terms cannot be coherently mapped onto the distinction between the mental and the physical as deployed by current philosophy of mind ... unless that discussion is already committed to a type of phenomenalism.’ (Moran 1996: 3)

The reason these distinctions cannot be aligned is that whereas Brentano conceived of intentionality subjectively, as a feature of certain phenomena discovered in introspection, contemporary intentionalists think of intentionality objectively, as a relation between representations and states of affairs. According to Brentano’s conception of intentionality, there is really no question of a brain state being intentional, since when we reflect on the appearance of a brain state, we will not find a phenomenon which intentionally contains an object within itself. All we find is the phenomenon of the brain state. By contrast, if we reflect on the appearance of a

mental state, such as a thought, we will indeed find a phenomenon which intentionally contains an object within itself, since in attending to the appearance of the thought, we cannot help but attend to its intentional object, i.e. what the thought is about.

My claim is this: once Brentano's conception of intentionality as a phenomenologically manifest feature was abandoned in favour of an objective conception of intentionality, intentionality was no longer suitable to serve as a mark of the mental. This is because intentionalism thereby became incapable of meeting Rorty's Challenge, for we cannot have grouped all the states we intuitively classify as 'mental' together because of their shared intentionality, if we could never tell that some of them are intentional without intentionalist theory. Intentionalism is theoretically rather than phenomenologically motivated: it provides intentionalist analyses of states which do not appear to be intentional, in order to achieve its theoretical aims of using intentionality to unify and naturalise the mind. However it is in the very nature of this project that the concept of mind is taken for granted and not explained, because if certain states do not appear to be intentional, and indeed have only been discovered to be intentional since Armstrong, then recognition of their intentionality cannot explain their classification as mental.

Consider bodily sensations, which many philosophers feel inclined to say are 'not *about* anything but simply are' (Gunderson 1985: 166; see also Campbell 1984: 23). The standard intentionalist response is to construe them as intentional states directed at our own bodies. Thus Dretske writes that 'pains, tickles, and itches stand to physical states of the body ... the way olfactory, visual, and auditory experience stand to physical states of the environment' (Dretske 1995: 103), the idea being that bodily

sensations are akin to perceptions in being 'awarenesses of objects, not objects of which we are aware' (ibid.: 103). Tye also thinks that to have a sensation is to be conscious of a part of your own body, so that if I have a pain in my leg, then 'I am aware of something in my leg (and not in my head, which is where the experience itself is) as painful. My pain represents damage in my leg'. (Tye 1995: 116)

These proposals are certainly plausible in claiming that typically when I have a pain in the leg, for example, my attention is directed upon damage in my leg. Nevertheless, it is not so clear there is any sense in which the pain itself can plausibly be said to be intentionally directed upon the damage. As far as the phenomenology is concerned, the pain appears as something in my leg, not something directed upon my leg, and if there is indeed something intentionally directed upon my leg, it could only really be my brain state, or an experiential state realised by my brain state. Dretske and Tye do not dispute this: they think the pain is a representation of my leg as painful, the representation itself (and thus the pain itself) being 'in my head', as Tye puts it. In fact, they adopt this position specifically in order to get away from the notion of a pain as a phenomenal individual located within the leg: their proposal is phenomenologically revisionary, but they think the theoretical benefits compensate. The problem, however, is that if the only way you could know that pain is intentional is via the theory that pain involves the directedness of a brain state upon damage to the body, then it cannot have been the intentionality of pain which led to its classification as mental.

In short, if simple reflection upon pain does not reveal that pain is intentional, then intentionality cannot be the reason pains were grouped together with emotions,

desires, beliefs, etc. Pending some other reason for thinking that ‘mental’ is a significant category, then, the intentionalist’s efforts to unify the mental by analysing phenomenal states as intentional states is undermined. An intentionalist might respond that if phenomenal consciousness is a type of intentional content, then to recognise the phenomenal character of a state is thereby to recognise its intentionality, whether this is recognised as such or not. The response does not work, however, because even if phenomenal states are just intentional states, the lack of any noticeable similarity between the intentionality manifested by belief and pain, for instance, would mean that their shared intentionality could not be the reason they were both classified as ‘mental’.

The same point can be made in relation to the other standard example of apparently non-intentional mental states, namely moods such as ‘nervousness, elation, and undirected anxiety’ (Searle 1983: 1) or ‘[d]read, depression, and light-heartedness’ (Campbell 1984: 23). The most developed intentionalist response to these cases is made by Crane, who analyses them as ‘a matter of having a certain attitude to oneself and one’s position in the world’; to feel Searle’s ‘undirected anxiety’, for instance, is to ‘regard the world ... as a potentially disturbing place for oneself’, whereas in depression, ‘the world seems to the subject to be a pointless, colourless place: nothing seems worth doing.’ (Crane 1998: 242)

Now just as with the intentionalist analysis of sensations, there is something almost incontrovertible to these suggestions, in that if an anxious or depressed person were asked how they felt about themselves or the world, these are certainly things they might say. Nevertheless, it is not clear from the type of judgements anxious and

depressed people are disposed to make, that either anxiety or depression itself can properly be described as intentionally directed upon the world or self. Certainly the intentionality of such states need not be phenomenologically manifest to anxious or depressed people, who recognise their moods simply through the way they feel. But if it is so well hidden that anxiety in particular was able to become the paradigm case of an entirely unfocused state of mind, then even if Crane is right that such states are intentional, their intentionality cannot be the reason they were classified as 'mental'. Just as with pain, intentionality is obviously not the stand-out feature of anxiety which might tempt us to mark it off from merely physical states.

An intentionalist might respond by appealing to the transparency of experience as a phenomenological consideration favouring intentionalism. Thus Tye argues, using the example of back ache, that 'When I turn my gaze inwards and try to focus my attention on *intrinsic* features of my pain experience ..., features the experience has in itself apart from what it represents, I do not seem to come across any. I always seem to end up attending to what I am experiencing *in my back*' (Tye 1997: 338). Tye thinks intentionalism explains this transparency, because if phenomenal character is the same as intentional content, then attending to the phenomenal character of the pain is the same as attending to what the pain represents; that is why whenever we introspectively attend to bodily sensations, we always 'end up scrutinizing external features or properties' (Tye 1995: 136). Thus the intentionalist can argue that our awareness of the transparency of sensations explains why they were grouped with other intentional states, for just as I cannot attend to my thought about Italy without attending to Italy, so I cannot attend to my pain without attending to my body.

The problem with this response is that pains phenomenologically present themselves as sensations located within the body, rather than experiential states ‘in the head’, but transparency only supports intentionalism once the latter conception is adopted. Thus if we think of pains as experiential states, then the fact that having a pain provides nothing to focus on except the pained body part may indeed lend phenomenological support to an intentionalist analysis according to which the pain state is exhausted by what it represents, as opposed to an analysis which invokes something distinct from the represented body part, such as a non-intentional quale. But if we think of pains as sensations located within body parts, then the fact there is nothing to focus on except the pained body part does not provide a reason for thinking pain is intentional, since the pained body part does not phenomenologically manifest any intentional directedness. In short, pain states may seem to be intentionally directed upon parts of the body, but pains located in parts of the body do not. Given that pains are reconceived as experiential states only on theoretical grounds, then, their transparency cannot provide the intentionalist with a phenomenological explanation of their classification as mental. As far as the phenomenology is concerned, the only reason I cannot attend to my pain without attending to my body is that the pain is in my body.

Another tact the intentionalist might try is to deny that any sensations or moods phenomenologically present themselves as non-intentional. William Seager, for instance, argues that certain moods only appear non-intentional if we mistake ‘modes of consciousness’ (Seager 1999: 184) which are analogous to the attitudinal components of propositional attitudes, for states of consciousness in their own right. Thus by focusing our attention exclusively upon the mode of consciousness, which is

just a ‘background colouring of the field of consciousness’ (ibid.: 184), we start to think we are phenomenologically presented with a non-intentional mood.

The problem with this proposal is brought out by Seager’s own comparison with propositional attitudes, for we have no parallel tendency to isolate the attitudinal component of propositional attitudes, and thereby conclude that they too are non-intentional. Nobody thinks you can hope without hoping something, but many do think you can be anxious without being anxious about something. The question arises, then, of why we are so inclined to treat the modes of consciousness of some moods in isolation, when we have no parallel inclination for other types of mental states, and the answer would seem to be, pending some argument to the contrary, that the phenomenology of moods like anxiety is different: they present themselves as directionless.[6]

In conclusion, intentionality as conceived by contemporary intentionalism cannot be the mark of the mental; if it was then we could presumably have overlooked it in a few cases, and thus ended up classifying certain sensations and moods as physical, which seems absurd. At most, intentionality could just happen to be a shared property of all the states grouped together as ‘mental’ for other reasons, though unless we endorse these reasons, then it is not clear why we should regard the purported discovery of this shared property as of any particular significance.

[6] Note that it would not help to appeal to the high level of generality of moods like anxiety or depression - a point emphasised by both Seager and Crane - because propositional attitudes like hope can be equally general; you can hope to have a good life, for instance, but the high level of generality involved here does not incline us to think that hope can be non-intentional.

But what about Brentano's subjective conception of intentionality: is that the mark of the mental? Well, as regards the apparent non-intentionality of states like pain and anxiety, Brentano is in an even worse position than contemporary intentionalists, since he needs their intentionality to be phenomenologically manifest. Brentano does nothing to overcome this difficulty. About pain, he dogmatically asserts that an intentional structure can be detected once the physical and mental phenomena are held clearly apart (Brentano op. cit.: 83-5 & 90-1), and as regards anxiety, he does not even seem to have noticed any difficulty (ibid.: 199).[7] A more fundamental problem with Brentano's criterion, however, is that it excludes dispositional propositional attitudes in principle. They cannot phenomenologically exhibit what Husserl disparagingly called a 'box-within-box structure' (Husserl 1970: 557), because they are not phenomena. Consequently the states which philosophers from Chisholm to Davidson have regarded as the paradigms of the mental would not count as mental at all.

IV

The proposal that phenomenal consciousness is the mark of the mental is structurally different from intentionalism. This is because intentionalists argue that all mental states are intentional, even those that are apparently non-intentional, but the parallel proposal about phenomenal consciousness accepts that certain states are not phenomenal, arguing either that non-phenomenal states count as mental because of their connection to phenomenal states, which is Searle's view, or else that non-phenomenal states cannot be genuinely mental, which is a view Galen Strawson

[7] Brentano would presumably have accused contemporary intentionalists of conflating the physical and mental phenomena of pain.

shows considerable sympathy with (Strawson 1994: ch. 6; Strawson 2005). In short, the aim is to show that phenomenal consciousness is the 'central mental notion' (Searle 1992: 84), not that all the states we intuitively classify as mental are phenomenal.

The reasoning behind Searle's 'Connection Principle' is as follows. Certain of our unconscious states are intrinsically intentional, and all intrinsically intentional states have aspectual shape, i.e. they present their contents under certain aspects to the exclusion of others. Only conscious intentionality is intrinsically aspectual, however, and so since in the case of the unconscious there is 'nothing else there except neurophysiological states', and there is 'no aspectual shape at the level of the neurons' (Searle 1992: 161), Searle concludes that these states must possess aspectual shape in virtue of being 'capable of generating conscious states' in which aspectual shape is 'manifest' (ibid.: 161-2). Strawson, by contrast, denies that intentionality can ever be properly ascribed to dispositions or the neural states that ground them, saying that, 'neural phenomena in the absence of experiential phenomena aren't intrinsically mentally contentful intentional phenomena any more than pits in a CD are intrinsically musically contentful' (Strawson 2005: 60). Both agree, however, that the concept of mind is squarely based upon phenomenal consciousness, and that ascriptions of intentionality to non-phenomenal states are parasitic upon the more fundamental intentionality of phenomenal states, whether or not such ascriptions are legitimate.[8]

According to Rorty, this view that the intentionality of phenomenal states is fundamental, is motivated by a conception of phenomenal properties as having 'no

appearance-reality distinction' (Rorty 1979: 29), a conception which both Searle and Strawson explicitly endorse (Searle 1992: 122; Strawson 1994: 51). The view arises, Rorty thinks, because once phenomenal states are conceived as subjective appearances, it seems that unlike a mark which can be interpreted one way or the other (as an English word, a French word, or just a mark), a conscious thought has an interpretation already built into it, since its content is whatever it appears to be. Given this conception of the phenomenal, then, mental states came to be contrasted with physical states, because they were conceived as either subjective appearances, or as states which are intrinsically intentional because of their connection to appearances.

The problem with conceiving of phenomenal states this way, however, is that we may inadvertently be conceiving of particulars with a peculiar kind of essence, rather than events or states of people. Rorty and William Lycan both argue this (Rorty 1979: 28-32; Lycan 1987: 16-21; Lycan 1996: 51-4), the reasoning being that we must be conceiving of particulars, since the intuition that the reality of a sensation is exhausted by its appearance, collapses into the intuition that appearance is the essence of the sensation, and yet we tend to lack intuitions about the essences of events and states. Lycan even named this tendency for 'slipping tacitly from talk of mental states and events to what amounts to talk of phenomenal individuals', dubbing it 'the Banana Peel' (Lycan 1987: 17). If Lycan and Rorty are right, then, and unifying the mind with phenomenality does require a commitment to phenomenal individuals, then it might seem, as it does to Rorty, that the concept of mind cannot be separated from fully blown Cartesian dualism, '"mind stuff" and all' (Rorty op. cit.: 30).

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[8] For a reconstruction and analysis of Searle's argument, see Kriegel 2003: 273-83.

The claim that the concept of mind is based on phenomenality would be on stronger ground, then, if phenomenal consciousness can be understood as the possession by certain states of a distinctive type of property, rather than the existence of pure subjective appearance in Searle and Strawson's sense. These might be thought to be sensory or qualitative properties, such as the burning or pulsating feelings associated with different pains, or the sinking or surging feelings associated with different emotions. The problem, however, is that this would exclude too much of our mental lives. In particular, it would exclude occurrent thought, which though not sensory in any recognisable sense, is still associated with a distinctive phenomenology, as many have recently argued (e.g. Pitt 2004 and Strawson 2005: 47-53; see also Crane 2001: 74-6). Consequently any sense of 'phenomenal' capable of serving as the mark of the mental would have to be wide enough to capture both sensory and cognitive experience.

Reflection upon the phenomenology reveals no such common factor, however. To see this, consider the differences between thinking silently to yourself and having a sensation. One difference is that having a sensation typically focuses your attention upon a part of your body, but having a thought does not. A second is that bodily sensations can be sharp or dull, pleasant or painful, and are experienced at differing levels of intensity, but none of these qualitative or quantitative measures apply in the same way to thoughts. A third is that thoughts are actions over which we exercise control, but sensations are conceived as involuntary states we passively undergo, and over which we can at most exercise indirect control. And a fourth difference is that the phenomenology of thinking bears a certain resemblance to hearing yourself talk, but having a sensation bears no resemblance to perceiving an action.

Once these differences are reflected upon, I would suggest, the only clear common factor left between sensory and cognitive experiences is that they are both occurrent; to feel something and to think something are both happenings or events. We obviously we cannot gloss 'phenomenal' in terms of occurrency alone, however, since we occupy innumerable non-mental occurrent states. But if phenomenal states are simply occurrent as opposed to dispositional mental states, then we still need to be told what makes a state count as 'mental'.

It might be thought that a sense of 'phenomenal' capable of capturing both sensory and cognitive experience is Thomas Nagel's notion (borrowed from Farrell 1950: 183) of 'what it is like' to be in a state. Thus it might be said that there is something it is like to be thinking, hurting or feeling emotional, and that all these states are consequently phenomenal. The problem, however, is that the generality of this notion is purchased at the price of both vagueness and ineliminability, for if in referring to 'what it is like' to be in a state, we are indeed referring to a property of states, and not rather slipping on Lycan's 'Banana Peel', then the property would have to be general enough to be a common factor between states as diverse as, for instance, thinking about algebra and feeling a sharp pain in the kneecap. When asked to expound this feature, however, it seems that all we can do is fall back on the mantra that in both cases there is 'something it is like'; to say anything more substantive would require us to identify a common factor apart from their both being occurrent mental states.

As a reminder of the vagaries of 'what it's like' talk, it is worth remembering that in a colloquial sense, there is something it is like for two snooker balls to collide. What

there is not, however, is something it is like *to be* one of the two snooker balls colliding, and here we see the only philosophically operative element to the idea of what it is like to be in a state, namely the idea of being aware of the state in virtue of being in it; this may be a tip off to the real mark of the mental.

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The only clear connection between thinking about algebra and feeling a sharp pain is in the way we are aware of these states, namely through introspection. There is 'something it is like' in both cases to be sure, but this simply indicates that both states must be accompanied by introspective awareness, not that there need be anything in common between what is introspected. That it is introspective awareness of the properties of a state, rather than simply the properties themselves, which is the basis of our conception of what it is like to be in the state, can be seen from the fact that I could be in exactly the same type of pain state as another person, and yet would only be able to form a conception of what it is like to be in the state from my own case; the properties of each state might be the same, but I could only introspect my own. Of course, it could be said that the 'what it's like' properties of a state just are its introspectively known, subjective properties, but then we are once more landed with the problem of explaining why abstract thoughts and sharp pains do not seem to have any introspectively known, subjective properties in common. The better tactic is to say that what they have in common is that we are aware of them both introspectively.

Introspection is our ability to be aware of certain of our own states in virtue of occupying them; in saying no more than this, we remain neutral between different

theories of what this awareness amounts to. Not only is introspectibility a common feature of sensations, occurrent thoughts, and all other phenomenal states, but it also has a deep connection with dispositional intentionality. Dispositional intentional states are not directly introspectible, in the sense that having a dispositional belief cannot thereby make you aware of that belief, but the process of introspecting is nevertheless our principal route to discovering what dispositional beliefs and desires we do have.[9] We achieve this by working out our beliefs and desires, as for instance we might work out our true feelings towards a person by running through our beliefs about them, recalling our reactions to them in previous encounters, etc. Some dispositional states do not need to be worked out, and we may simply require a prompt to get us thinking about the topic in question, as for instance with beliefs about historical dates, capital cities, etc. However, in many cases, usually those we find most significant, we bring our dispositional beliefs and desires to light by introspecting. Thus introspection has a role to play in explaining how dispositional beliefs become occurrent; Searle's Connection Principle, by contrast, allocates no such role to subjective appearance.

Introspection also provides a good basis for explaining the conceptual connection between the phenomenal consciousness and intentionality of states which have both, such as occurrent thoughts and mental images. The reason is that if to refer to the phenomenal properties of the state is simply to refer to the fact that we have introspective awareness of it, then the basis of the connection is presumably just that some intentional properties are introspectible. Thus when I introspect a yellowish-orange after-image, or my thoughts about Don Bradman, I must be aware of some of

[9] I do not mean to imply that having a sensation or occurrent thought thereby makes you aware of it, only that having a sensation or occurrent thought makes it available to introspect, which is not the case

the intentional properties of these states, otherwise I would have no idea what I was experiencing or thinking about. A change in these introspectible intentional properties would therefore constitute a change in what it is like to be in the state, notwithstanding the complexities to the intentional-phenomenal relationship that would be introduced if the state also possessed non-introspectible intentional properties (as an externalist might hold) or non-intentional phenomenal properties ('qualia').

One potential problem for this proposal comes from states sometimes referred to as the 'Cognitive Unconscious' (Güzeldere 1997: 20), the best known of which are blindsight states (Weiskrantz 1986) and David Marr's 2½D sketches (Marr 1982). Blindsight states are often interpreted as cases in which the functional role of seeing is maintained, albeit in a restricted way, and yet the state lacks phenomenal consciousness; subjects respond to areas of their visual field similarly to when seeing normally, but claim to see nothing. Marr's 2½D sketches, on the other hand, are conceived as unified representations of the surface geometry of visual fields, which mediate between two dimensional representations based directly on the retinal image, and three dimensional representations of volumes as well as visible surfaces. In both cases, there is a strong functional case for treating these states as having intentional content, and hence as mental like other intentional states. But if introspectibility is the criterion of mentality, then since they are not introspectible, it may seem that they cannot be mental after all.

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with dispositional states.

This ceases to be a problem once we realise that any solution to the philosophical problem of determining the mark of the mental should be treated as descriptive rather than prescriptive, and hence should not be thought to rule out well motivated developments to the concept of mind. To determine the mark of the mental is to determine why the paradigmatic mental states were grouped together and contrasted with the physical. This grouping obviously had nothing to do with the cognitive unconscious, but that is no reason to rule out the possibility of counting newly discovered states as mental on the basis of their similarities or connections to the paradigmatic mental states. All that is being claimed, then, is that introspection is the 'central mental notion', as Searle put his structurally parallel claim about phenomenal consciousness (Searle 1992: 84), not that all mental states must be introspectible.[10]

The best thing introspectibility has going for it is that it answers Rorty's challenge. Our primary sources of knowledge about the physical world are perception-based, and in perception we are typically presented with objects outside of us with a size, shape and specifiable location. Introspection is not like this. When we are engaged in silent soliloquy, our thoughts are not presented as objects outside of us, or even as physical states of our bodies. Consequently, it makes sense that thought would come to be contrasted with the physical world. The same could be said of desires, emotions, and most other mental activity. Bodily sensations are a special case, because they do direct our attention to a part of the physical world, namely our own bodies, which is probably why common-sense retains a distinction between physical and psychological pain. Nevertheless, the absence of anything physical in the body with which the

[10] Similar remarks apply to the Freudian unconscious, and to any other states which we may at some point find reasons to classify as 'mental'.

sensation might be identified readily explains why sensations should also have come to be contrasted with the physical.

Introspection also explains the mental-physical contrast without indicting the category 'mental'. This is because even if introspectible states are physical states, and hence contrasting them with the physical was a mistake, they must nevertheless be a significant subset of physical states, simply because they are the only states known in two very different ways, namely through introspection or perception. As Dretske points out, although philosophers may disagree about the nature of introspection, 'most are willing to concede that there is a dramatic difference between the way you know how I feel and the way I know it' (Dretske op. cit.: 40); this 'dramatic difference' needs accounting for. Dretske himself construes introspection as a form of perception, but Searle rejects introspection wholesale, on the grounds that there is no distinction 'between the perception and the object perceived' for conscious states (Searle op. cit.: 97). Searle's preferred explanation of our awareness of mental states is 'conscious subjectivity', the familiar idea being that we are aware of subjective appearances simply in virtue of having them. In our neutral sense of 'introspection', then, Searle does think we introspect our mental states: all he really denies is that introspection is a type of perception.

For Dretske, introspection is perceptual, and hence ultimately intentional, whereas for Searle, introspection is a consequence of the nature of phenomenal consciousness. These philosophers are following a general pattern in this regard, in that intentionalists tend to understand introspection in intentional terms, and advocates of phenomenal consciousness tend to understand introspection in phenomenal terms.

However if introspection is reduced in either of these ways, then it can no longer serve as the mark of the mental, given the problems we encountered above. This may suggest the need to find new ways to explain introspection, and indeed, it is perhaps inevitable that philosophers would want to show that introspection is really something else, given its associations with ontological dualism, introspective psychology, and intractable epistemological scepticism. Nevertheless, whether or not introspection can be reduced, it may still be the case that the concepts of mind and introspection are inextricably bound together, and that like it or not, introspectibility is the mark of the mental.

word count: 7998

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